

**PANOQUINA PANOQUINOIDES EUGEON SKINNER
(LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIDAE) FROM THE WINDWARD
ISLANDS, LESSER ANTILLES**

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Panoquina panoquinoides panoquinoides Skinner (1891) is widespread in the southern part of the USA and the northern West Indies but is usually restricted to coastal habitats (Spencer Smith *et al.*, 1994). The subspecies *P.p.eugeon* (Godman & Salvin, 1896) seems to be unique to the Windward Islands but it is not known to which subspecies the population that inhabits Trinidad (Riley, 1975) belongs. It is presumably the nominate form, as on the mainland of South America. Barcant (1970), in a monograph of Trinidad butterflies, does not list the species at all and nor is Trinidad listed as a locality by Spencer Smith *et al.* (1994).

DISTRIBUTION RECORDS

P.p.eugeon was described from specimens collected on Union Island, Grenadines and Granville & St George's parishes in Grenada (Godman & Salvin, 1896). Spencer Smith *et al.* (1994) give records from the following Grenadine Islands: Bequia, Caille, Mayreau and Palm.

My own investigations on St Lucia (April 1983, June/July 1986, May/June 1989) and St Vincent (May 1989) were incidental to a survey of reptile populations and the preparation of conservation management plans for endangered reptile species (Corke, 1987, 1992). St Lucia has an excellent guide book to its butterflies (Hunt & Mitchell, 1979) and with one exception I saw no species in St Lucia that were not included in that guide and in the habitat types already associated with the species. The sole exception was a small brown hesperid which was quite common on the halophytic grassland just above the beach on Maria Major island at the extreme southern tip of St Lucia (see fig. 1). I could not identify these specimens beyond the level of genus using Riley (1975) [*P.p.eugeon* is not figured]. The find was announced as a new species for St Lucia (but not identified) in Geoghegan & Renard (1985). Specimens were seen on the Maria Islands on each of my three visits in the 1980s.

The same species was found in very similar conditions at Milligan Cay off the extreme south of St Vincent in May 1989. My work on reptiles tended to pay especial attention to small islets, so there is no reason to suppose that *P.p.eugeon* will not be found on the coastal mainland of St Lucia & St Vincent.

With the publication of Spencer Smith *et al.* (1994) the identification problem was resolved. The specimen from Maria Major (April, 1983) in Fig. 2 is quite clearly *P.p.eugeon*.

Figure 3 summarizes the known distribution of the two subspecies of *P.panoquinoides* in the Lesser Antilles. It is likely that the species will be discovered on most of the islands north of St Lucia but where the transition from *P.p.eugeon* to *P.p.panoquinoides* will occur is pure conjecture.

LARVAL FOODPLANTS

The larva of *P.p.eugeon* is unknown and thus its likely foodplants can only be guessed at by what is known for other subspecies. *P.p.panoquinoides* on Jamaica were

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Fig. 1. Maria Major Island, St Lucia, seen from the north. The coastal grassland on the leeward side of the island is the only habitat for *P.p.eugeon*. [photo: David Corke]



Fig. 2. The first specimen of *P.p.eugeon* collected (in 1983) from the Maria Islands, St Lucia. Scale lines 1 mm intervals. [Photo: David Corke]



Fig. 3. Map of the Lesser Antilles showing islands and island banks (from Lazell, 1972) and the known distribution of *Panoquina panoquinoides panoquinoides* (p) in the Leeward Islands and of *Panoquina panoquinoides eugeon* (e) in the Windward Islands.

reared on *Cynodon dactylon* although the eggs were found on *Mimosa pudica* (Brown & Heineman, 1972). *P.p.errans* from California feeds also on *C. dactylon* and also on *Sporobolus virginicus* (Comstock, 1930).

On the Maria Islands, which have been thoroughly surveyed botanically (Fournet, 1982), *Sporobolus virginicus* and *S. cf.jacquemontii* occur as does a species of *Mimosa* (cf. *camporum*) but *Cynodon* is absent.

FLIGHT TIMES

The type specimens of the species were captured in October (Godman & Salvin, 1896). I saw adults flying in all months from April to July. As with many tropical species, *P.p.eugeon* may fly throughout the year.

IS *P.P.EUGEON* A GOOD SPECIES?

The taxon was originally named as a full species (*Prenes eugeon* Godman & Salvin, 1896). Riley (1975) says "It could well be a distinct species". Spencer Smith *et al.* (1994) consider that description of the larva is necessary before assessing this suggestion. Certainly the adults are quite distinct in terms of wing pattern.

Entomologists holidaying in the islands of the Lesser Antilles could help greatly with further distribution records and studies of egg-laying and larval morphology. Only then will the question of specific status be resolved.

SUMMARY

The skipper butterfly *Panoquina panoquinoides eugeon* (Godman & Salvin, 1896) is reported, for the first time, from St Lucia and St Vincent. In both cases the species was inhabiting a tiny island close inshore to the main island.

The known distribution of the subspecies in the Windward Islands, to which the taxon is probably unique, is mapped.

The possibility that the taxon merits specific status is discussed.

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